Fellowship in Prayer

"For a world united in prayer"

We shall steer safely through every storm, so long as our heart is right, our intention fervent, our courage steadfast, and our trust fixed on God. If at times we are somewhat stunned by the tempest, never fear. Let us take breath, and go on afresh.

— Francis de Sales

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OUR PURPOSE

To promote the practice of prayer among ALL religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

W. J. Thompson

"Only God could have thought of Christmas!" He has brought together in the Christmas story things we never dreamed could be blended, and on a tapestry woven of stable straw and starlight, we behold a picture that touches the heart, illumines the mind, thrills the soul, and transforms human life. It is old, yet ever new; timeless, yet most timely! The story is told with a simplicity captivating in its clearness, and at the same time, marvelously profound.

Bethlehem is the birthplace of the sweetest story ever told. So "homey" yet so heavenly. Other religions picture man seeking God, but Christianity pictures God seeking man through the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. After the angel's announcement of the coming of the Saviour to this earth, the shepherds turned to each other and said, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing . . . and they came with haste."

In the words just quoted we find the Spirit of Christmas. It is an eager spirit. And that same spirit of eagerness is typical of Christmas today. We think of the excitement of children who can hardly wait for Christmas to come!

The spirit of Christmas is also a kindly spirit. The shepherds who hastened to Bethlehem were filled with friendly thoughts of others. And this is one mark of Christmas to this very day—a thoughtful and a kindly spirit revealed in the sending of Christmas cards, and in gifts that bring joy to others. And no matter what our financial condition, we can all give the golden gift of friendship, love and Christian fellowship. Remember, it is not what you have in your purse, but what you have in your heart, that matters most. Pray that God will help you make this Christmas memorable for some needy soul.

The Spirit of Christmas is a family spirit. When the shepherds arrived in Bethlehem, they looked upon a Family Group—Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe. The Christian religion, at its Founder's coming, presents the picture of a Family. And when you kneel before the Babe of Bethlehem you find all life's relationships become sweet and sacred. After worshiping Christ, the shepherds returned praising God for all they had seen. May you do the same, and you will have a happy, blessed Christmas!

CHRISTMAS BOYCOTT?

Marnie Mellblom

"Tell your children Santa Claus didn't come this year because some of your brothers and sisters were killed in Birmingham by some of your co-citizens."

With these words, James Baldwin, prominent Negro writer and a spokesman for the Committee of Writers and Artists for Justice, threw the first rock at jolly Old St. Nick. This group of intellectually angry artists has suggested a boycott on Christmas as a way to make the Birmingham murders meaningful. They ask that only the religious significance of the day should be observed--that no presents be bought this year.

It is a challenge that is hard to resist. To fill our churches and synagogues with people and prayers is a worthy challenge and one which has far greater impact than exchanging gifts with friends and relatives.

However, children do not grasp the subtleties of sacrifice and fasting. My six-year-old son and I attended one of the civil rights rallies where Mr. Baldwin threw out his challenge. My son, who until then had been playing happily with the other children, sobered instantly, and on the verge of tears, asked "Why?" Mr. Baldwin's answer was not enough for him. The Birmingham murders were real enough to him--he needed no pricking of the conscience. And in all honesty, the guilt is not his. He is not in a position to change the laws which allow such murders to occur. He cannot vote. He cannot lobby. We as adults are all guilty--it happened in our time and we did nothing. But the children are guilty only by reflection--they reflect the views and thoughts of their elders. The guilt is ours and Santa died for us a long time ago.

There has been much comment, pro and con, since Mr. Baldwin took the first swing at that commercial cornucopia known as Santa Claus. Several critics point out that the sacrificial gesture may have appeal among those already committed to the cause of civil rights but the call for a ban on shopping is too idealistic. The thousands oblivious to the Negro and his plight will ignore the call.

Certainly the tragic deaths in Birmingham must not be forgotten.

And the demand for remembrance through personal sacrifice must not be ignored. But can we impress our living children with the meaning of the event through depriving them? Do not children need positive rather than negative examples? Would not the Birmingham children have exchanged gifts with those they loved? That is the purpose of Christmas giving—an expression of love for each other.

Adults do not need the solid feel of a gift to reflect their love. Perhaps a fund could be started, made up of the money we adults would have spent on each other, to be used in some positive way—a living memorial for those children—possibly to finance some phase of the complex and costly effort toward equal justice for all people.

The children of today are destined to inherit this and many problems of our society. Should we then not devote our maximum effort to expressions of brotherhood and understanding rather than vindictiveness? Santa Claus—as he has come to be the symbol of ultra-commercialization which detracts from the true meaning of Christmas—certainly is expendable. Personally, I would prefer the symbol of a birthday party for a Baby Jesus to the perennial scene of children sitting on a bearded man's knee and asking for material playthings.

But the challenge remains; and in the happiness of the season, the the tragedies of our times must not be glossed over. To return the prime emphasis of the celebration to its spiritual foundations is a commendable goal, one which demands prayers not only for the dead but also for the living.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

May the grace of the Lord Jesus abide in every one of us, strengthen us to greater efforts in service and prayer through the coming year, and cause us to dwell in all humility and love on the meaning of his birth and the events of his immortal life. May we pray to God for gratitude that he came to us at all... May we also bow our heads in reverence to the memory of all the prophets, East and West, who have guided struggling humanity in the past ages and, we may be sure, will still appear to guide those who come after us.

(The above message was written by Mr. Paul Hourihan, former editor of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, who currently is engaging in fulltime graduate study at Harvard University.)

WE DON'T NEED A CHRISTMAS TREE

Velta Myrle Allen

It was Christmas Eve. Every child who could recite, say a poem or sing a song was called upon at church to do so. There had been weeks of practicing for this, the biggest event of the year. It meant new dresses, hair ribbons and shoes to wear and after the program there would be bags containing an orange, an apple, some candy, nuts and popcorn. It was a wonderful time, a time of happiness and "Merry Christmas!" wishes.

But there was no Christmas tree. Never! What did a pine tree have to do with the birth of Jesus?

Next morning, at home, we would get up early for we knew there would be something at each plate on the table—a pair of shoes, a garment and perhaps one toy. And we *never* gave Santa Claus a thought! He was as mythical to us as the Stork is to the modern world of today.

We loved our parents. We knew and felt their love—not so much by the toys and things they bought for us, but for the protection and bond of love we felt. Of course they spanked us now and then, but we knew this was only to teach us right from wrong. They knew that children must *learn* from others, that sometimes "individual self-expression" needs a great deal of guidance before and even after maturity.

Christmas Day was a happy time. We were not bothered by a lot of "things" for which we had no use. Instead, we received the spirit of the season to carry with us every day of the year. We gave of the things which every one is seeking—Faith, Hope and Love, and these are not wrapped up in tinselled boxes or on glittering trees that are heavy with the burden of their dying after a few hours of "glamour."

How wonderful it is at Christmas time, and other times, when one can find an open church door to enter quietly, unobserved, and spend some moments with prayers of gratitude that the Babe born in the stable made this privilege possible!

If all the hours spent for Christmas shopping and preparations were budgeted into prayer hours in some chapel, we might bring Peace on Earth a little sooner.

"AND THERE WAS A SIGN"

Zelma S. Dennis

It is always interesting to discover what others see, when all look at the same object. The winter heavens often are so clear and sharp that the stars not only are visible but more beautiful than on the nights of the other seasons. It was on an evening very close to Christmas and the sky was strange, somewhat clouded-over yet with very distinct patches of clear sky revealed. Our heavens in the past year had become background for many exciting and wonderful dramas in which man and his new space vehicles had performed. Satellites flitting back and forth no longer held such surprise. In fact, as we daily had become more space conscious we tended to be oblivious to the small miracles winging aloft.

Still for me the beauty of the winter night, especially at Christmas, always has brought a rare delight. This evening was destined to bring into focus in our modern world the age old story told in Bethlehem, and centuries would pause in their fevered pace.

This particular day I had spent baking cookies for special friends and one whom I loved dearly had called to bring her season's greetings. After we had exchanged our words of love and friendship and she was preparing to leave, we both noticed a wondrous sight in the heavens. A burst of light followed by a fiery trail appeared like a giant unseen hand writing in flaming script across the deep twilight sky. To my poetic friend and myself it had clearly written the word "JOY". She smiled and said: "It was a sign—truly a glorious sign." And I agreed.

To my more prosaic and fundamental family and other friends it spelled several different things but nothing with particular meaning. But to me it was unmistakably "Joy." And what a message to be revealed in the heavens at this time of the year! Even when the newspapers and radio and television told the simple story of a rocket launching it still could not dim the wonder and glory of the beautiful message that retold the old, old precious story of "Joy" at the birthday of the Saviour.

WHAT PRAYER IS —— NOT

Genevieve Burnell

With so much world emphasis on power, it may seem irrelevant to include prayer in the prevailing categories. Yet, scientifically speaking, the only real objection anyone can have to prayer is that they fail to understand it.

Certainly prayer is not a power to be weighed or measured. It is not even a power that can be harnessed or utilized in the ordinary sense of such statements. Its only physics can be its metaphysics and even in this department of speculation, the scope of known and proven truth must never contain nor limit the interminable potentiality available. All things are possible with God and them that believe; meaning, of course, with them that believe in the power of God.

Belief has frequently been found most limiting and restrictive. Formal and doctrinal beliefs tend to narrow perceptions just as old-fashioned traditional beliefs are barriers to scientific progress. Science is constantly having to break through resistant mental barriers in physics. In the same way, the acceptance of prayer finds many blocks when the mind holds to the narrow horizen of common beliefs gathered through generations of ignorant and superstitutious thinking. But belief that is alive and vital anticipates the unpredictable possibilities of power as yet untouched in spiritual dimensions of consideration. Research into the magnitude of this power must come under the general heading of prayer. For it is only through prayer that man is able to engage to be in touch with omnipotence and participate in the spiritual energy transmitted.

Perhaps the first need in presenting the case for prayer is to clear away the old-fashioned opinions which prevent a person from believing in it. So let us consider first *WHAT PRAYER IS NOT.*

To begin with, the forces released by the act of prayer are not magical. It would be better to describe them as supernatural, yet here again, the use of such a word is misconstrued. Literally, the term supernatural means that which is above the usual order of nature—not *against* nature but a power or force greater than that in nature's own order. Atomic energy expresses the tremendous power and froce in

the constituents of nature. But prayer, unlike atomic energy, is not a force of nature but is an engagement with a Nature which has decreed to all natural substances the order and purpose of their being.

Supernatural, then, really means augmenting natural substances with a superior purpose and nature.

Prayer, then, by transcending the limitations of nature, still follows and conforms in a perfectly natural way with the plan and order of the universe. Prayer will not wreck or destroy nature; rather, it enhances and perfects nature. And for this reason also there is nothing magical about prayer's action; and it could only be accounted so by the superstitious and uninformed.

Prayer is never a malevolent power. The vicious exploitation of spiritual power through prayer is preposterous. In fact, just the reverse is true; prayer acts as a clearinghouse for all our undisciplined wishes and desires. No evil can accrue anywhere as a result of prayer. It might wipe out enmities among people, but it would not kill the so-called enemies themselves. Nor can prayer be used as a means to further one's own personal ambitions. Certainly there is no harm in praying for success, but the answer will not come at another's expense, for prayer blesses any environment it covers.

Prayer is not an external force to be used offensively or defensively. The strong emphasis placed on the importance of material power in the world today has brought with it an even greater sense of weakness and inadequacy. Every new stomic test, every new discovery of nuclear science, brings with it greater panic in the civilized world, and more dire predictions threaten human society. Offensive and defensive power barely keep pace with each other, and man finds himself most insecure, between the jaws of hope and fear.

Yet prayer is not offered as a "supernatural" force to revolutionize material power. Instead, it is offered as the only salvation for a world sick with the excess of material violence. Without the inner strength provided by prayer, man cannot survive and keep his sanity in a world so materially vulnerable.

Prayer is not a substitute for material power. It would be utterly ridiculous to suggest that any nation, at this stage of the game, disarm and protect its boundary lines by prayer. Let us not say this couldn't be done if the need arose, because one cannot limit the limitless, but no one who believes in prayer and advocates its case does so by being fanatical. The real understanding of prayer reveals that there is always a miraculous way without changing anything at all.

Prayer is not a power to be exploited, and prayer is not a substitute for material preparedness. The preparedness provided by prayer is of quite a special order. The true miracle of it is what it does within the person himself, how it prepares him to face and deal with external conditions, how it protects him against inordinate panic, how it steadies him in the midst of shattering experiences, how it offers him a security in the midst of insecurity, a sense of security which is not smugness but is, rather, a deep recognition of protection above and beyond any that can be described in human language.

AWARENESS

Elizabeth Searle Lamb

Let me be ever aware of Thee, dear Lord.

Let me be aware of Thee now as I pray. Let it be Thy Presence which fills me and radiates through me, rather than my problems or my fears.

Let me be aware of Thee each day as I work. Let me be conscious of Thy nearness, of Thy help, of Thy encouragement.

Let me be aware of Thee, dear Lord, as I relax and rest and play. Let me be no less aware of Thee when I am having fun.

Let me be aware of Thee when I am conscious of great beauty. Let me see Thee in the natural beauty of the countryside, in the masterpiece of an artist; let me hear Thee in voices of a great choir, in a symphony of stormy sea, in a birdsong.

Let me be inwardly aware of Thee when I sleep, as when I wake. Let me feel Thy Presence wrapped protectingly around me. Let me shine forth with Thy light and give form to Thy creative impulse.

Let me be ever aware of Thee, dear Lord, for ever and ever.

Amen.

POOLS OF RESTORATION

Mildred Long

In the days of Jesus as recorded by John, there was a healing pool at Bethesda. A certain man had waited for healing. When Jesus questioned him, he replied that there had been no man to put him into the pool when the water was visited by the healing angel. Jesus stretched forth His hand and healed him.

Thousands of seeking souls still flock to pools or shrines in some miraculous way. Most of them fail to meet with the Divine healing Power at these places. Many distressed and disturbed people follow after this cure or that in search of healing for body or mind only to be disillusioned.

Healing comes through many avenues today. But to become effectual one change above all others must take place—a redirection of the desires and powers of the individual into life-giving channels. Sometimes this comes through psychiatry, or psychological counseling. Sometimes through prayer and spiritual development. Often it requires a combination of these helps to bring healing.

A friend of mine has spent several years with psychiatrists, psychologists, and a spiritual counselor in search of wholeness. No doubt each one has made a significant contribution to the healing she is now finding through a Christian psychological counselor. Another friend had the ehlp of psychiatry, dream interpretation, and hypnosis wit hout receiving his healing. And then a Christian counselor was able to awaken him to the realization that he was sick in his soul. From then on he made rapid strides toward normal living.

Whatever serves to awaken that inner fire that burns up to touch the divine power becomes the healing agency. Jesus said to the impotent man beside the pool of Bethesda: "Wilt thou be made whole?... Do you want to be made whole?... Is it your real desire?" The man's reply was evasive, but Jesus knew his heart and responded to that heart yearning.

Everyone who seeks healing of body or mind must answer this question: Do you want to be well? Does this desire take precedence over every other? Are you willing to do what you must do to regain wholeness? Are you prepared to immerse yourself in your pool of healing—to give all your attention to the means and the thinking that will produce the results?

For when a life is off balance, the one thing supremely needed is the restoration of balance at the center. And that center in every man is the place within his heart where he makes contact with the Divine Power. This contact must be restored and made secure for healing power to flow through.

The best pool of restoration lies at the center of man's consciousness, the place where God has planted the fire of divine aspiration. Here the setting is perfect: man going within himself to seek God there and keep Him there; God meeting man in his search and hour of need; and therefore the union of man's desire and God's provision. Here in this setting, the miracle takes place.

But it may be a slow miracle. Even after the contact is made, the man may have a lifetime of bad thinking and destructive use of emotions behind him. We do not exclude the possibility that such a brilliant fire of divine indwelling may burst upon the soul as to cause a complete and quick transformation. But more commonly the pathway leads through days and months of discipline and redirection of thoughts and feelings, a reshaping of personality by daily entering the pool of contact with God through prayer and worship.

The pool where the angel stirs the water is still with us. Sometimes we must lend a hand to help each other enter it. But the stepping down into it is the entrance to one's own heart of hearts, the only place where each man for himself makes contact with the healing, transforming power of God.

A DOCTOR SAYS:

Prayer is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. As a physican, I have seen men, after all other therapy had failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer. It is the only power in the world that seems to overcome the so-called "laws of nature"; the occasions on which prayer has dramatically done this have been termed "miracles." But a constant, quieter miracle takes place hourly in the hearts of men and women who have discovered that prayer supplies them with a steady flow of sustaining power in their daily lives.

— *Anonymous*

PRESCRIPTION FOR PRAYER

Virginia E. Armstrong

Prayer is man's reach to God. Prayer is standing in God's presence. Prayer is listening to God's Word..

Prayer gives us assurance. Through prayer we find, hour by hour and minute by minute, inspiration from the High Source. Prayer reaches and takes us above our problems. It removes the frustrations and hurts in our hearts and our minds, for when we yield to the Divine Mind, we knit our weakness with His great strength.

Prayer produces rest and washes away the restlessness. God-Power eases our problems. The re is a clearing around the heart and an awakening of the Soul. The clouds fade and we are able to see a new world in the making.

True prayer seeks God first. His outward blessings follow as a matter of course: *"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."* The miracle of prayer occurs when we give ourselves to God, invite God into our lives.

The best results may be obtained by following a disciplined program. Pray at the same time each day. Close out mental discord. Release your problem. God cannot help until you free your frustrations, turn loose your troubles.

God will answer prayer in His way and time, and offer other rewards: recharging of energy...union with Divine Principle which controls all of life. In this union you will know fulfillment; you will be given the wisdom known to the Masters. It is all there for you.

PERCEIVE!

Recovering from illusion
I experience Truth
And grow strong

No effort wasted:
Even now October
Umbers November's leaves.

— Carla Patsuris

THE HUMAN HANDS

Harry Halsey Starrett

Human life upon this planet, could not exist without human hands—an all-important factor in the Creator's Plans.

As important as our hands are, there are many who just take them for granted rather than being ever mindful of what they mean to them and never ceasing expressing gratitude for them, to Him who gave them to us.

Whenever we are about to use our hands, in whatever work we have to do, let us pause and reflect upon the truth that great responsibility rests upon each of us, as to how we use our hands, mindful that they can be used for evil as well as for good and that the way we use our hands determines, in large measure, what spiritual progress we make in this life.

If we consecrate our hands to the service of Him who gave them to us, then the Love of God will flow through our hands, into all the work we do. Under this benign influence, our work will prosper and redound to the glory of God and to the uplift and betterment of the whole human race.

It is an ennobling thought, that God gave us two hands, so we might, with one hand, reach up and take hold of the hand of Christ who stands upon the top rung of the ladder of life and with the other hand, reach down and lift others up with us as we are, ourselves lifted up, thus emulating the way of the Master who said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Whenever we grasp the hand of a fellow-creature, in the spirit of friendship and good will, may the Love of God flow through our hand, into the lives of those whose hands we grasp, that they may feel, through us, the Presence of "The Giver of every Good and Perfect Gift."

Blessed is he who understands the true meaning of the human hands and who uses his hands in the fulfilling of the Creator's Plans.

God grant that we may consecrate and re-consecrate our hands to His service, using them, always, in giving rather than in getting, mindful that it is only through giving that we receive.

YOUR SPIRITUAL COMPASS

Mark Halpern

The only compass that can keep you ever on the course of your highest destiny, is the spiritual compass of undying trust and confidence in yourself and in your Creator. That compass of the spirit will never fail you.

And it is not enough for you to know that you have this infallible spiritual compass. You must continually make use of it—ever guiding your course by its magnetic needle.

Unless you keep the compass ever in view, ever watching the guiding direction of the magnetic needle, many will be the times you will be driven from your course by the winds inimical to achieving what should be yours. Treacherous whirlpools will exert themselves to draw you into their vortexes. The waves will grow into mountainous proportions of menacing fury, as though intent on plunging us into a nameless oblivion. And the blackness of the gathering storm clouds will seem to hide every ray of light that would pierce the veiling hellish gloom with a glimmer of hope and courage to the despairing soul.

It is then that you, the valiant mariner, had best remember to have recourse to your compass of the soul, and set your course aright according to the true direction as pointed out by its infallible magnetic needle of Faith.

Then it is, if you have forgotten your spiritual compass of perfect trust and self-confidence, you will be in danger of drifting far from the course of your destiny. If the reports of the world of man, if their opinions and judgments of a negative nature regarding your capabilities, count more with you than your faith and confidence in what the inner voice of your soul has told you, then you have thrown away your soul's compass.

You must quickly find it again, by getting away from the besieging clamor of the world's voices; and enter into the calm silence of deep meditation. There you will rediscover the guiding instrument of your soul. You will once more have at your command that spiritual compass with its infallible magnetic needle pointed, as ever, in the sure direction of the mystic port in the Cosmic Heart of God, wherein lies your glorious Heritage and Destiny.

Many individuals who eventu-

ally came to be regarded as successful in their field of chosen endeavor, were told in the beginning by others, that they lacked the qualities and capabilities for achieving anything worth while in the calling closest to their heart. What if they had listened to the opinions of their self-appointed fallible human critics, instead of keeping their eye on the magnetic needle of their soul's compass of utter faith and self-confidence?...

In the days of his poverty, Beethoven went to a music publisher to sell some of his works, so that he might buy much-needed food. After examining Beethoven's manuscripts, the publisher shook his head negatively and told him the music was not written in the popular style and therefore he could not buy it. What if Beethoven had turned from the compass of his soul and had begun to write the kind of music the publisher wanted? Would we have had the mighty Choral Symphony, the majestic concertos, and the magnificently sublime quartets?

Paderewski, in his youth, was told that he would never become more than an ordinary musician. Shumann-Heink, the great German-American operatic and concert singer—to abandon her operatic ambitions. Many successful writers in their early days of frustration and discouragement were told by editors to forget writing and try something else. Some of the greatest masterpieces in art and literature were turned down several times before their acceptance.

Those who reach the heights are individuals who never forget to watch the magnetic needle of their soul's compass—the magnetic needle of undying faith in victorious achievement. They keep the ship of their soul sailing in the direction of their Eternal Star of Glorious Destiny; thus, passing safely between the eddies of whirlpools of the world's disparagement and arriving safely, at last, at the mystic port of their heart's supreme desire.

Therefore, let this be the motto for all valiant mariners on the adventurous waters of the Universal seas:

"Always follow the infallible guidance of your soul's compass, thus progressing in the one direction pointed out by the undeviating magnetic needle. Keep your eye on your star, your hand on the helm, and trust God and your own soul. And you, too, shall reach that mystic port of Highest Attainment...."

And so, let us say with that great poet of the soul, Walt Whitman:

"Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,
Fearless for unknown shores."

THE CREDULITY OF ATHEISM

H. Richard Rasmusson

When a person swallows a wild, irrational tale, we call him credulous. It is putting faith in something fantastic. And such the atheist appears. "The fool hath said in his heart 'There is no God'."

The word "Atheist" comes from the Greek *atheos* meaning "no God." It has been defined as faith in the strange proposition that the universe originated in a cipher and is aimlessly rushing nowhere. Atheism, as discussed here, is the denial of God as the Mind - Power - Goodness working in and through the life process. Raising the questions "Whence?" "Whether?" "Why?", atheism answers, "From no source, to no end, for no reason." All this, it can be said, is credulous.

The atheist is credulous because he must believe that chance mutations and blind natural selection were the sole means of evolving all that is here from the Amœba to Adam, from chaos to Christ. Can we really believe this? Lord Bacon said, "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend and the Talmud and the Alcoran than that this universal frame is without a mind."

Can we really believe that the many-splendered, variegated nature, so rich in diversity, so aflame with colors, so patterned and ordered, so responsive to understanding by man's mind, all came about without intelligence or purpose? Can we really believe that human consciousness was such an accidental event? Can we believe that the brain, so intricate beyond our comprehension, and which has created the riches of civilization: the art of a Raphael, the philosophy of a Plato, the science of an Einstein, the religion of a Christ, was all brought into being by a blind struggle in nature? If you can believe this, you can believe the moon consists of green cheese.

Leslie Weatherhead tells of a physician in London talking to him one day about the embryo in the mother's womb and the way the cells in the embryo are differently determined—some make nerves, some bone, some brain, some teeth, some muscle, some toenails, some fingernails, and so on. Dr. Johnson, the doctor said, "If this is not evidence of purpose, highly intelligent purpose, I confess I do not know the meaning of the word."

Admiral Byrd in his book *Above* describes his feelings as he watch-

ed a day end at the South Pole. He wrote: "The conviction came that, that rhythm was too orderly, too harmonious, too perfect to be a product of blind chance—that, therefore, there must be purpose in the whole and that man was part of that whole and not an accidental offshoot."

The atheist is credulous when he explains or judges the voice of conscience as taboos we have not outgrown. In some instances this is a correct judgment. But to so read off the deepest moral experiences of mankind, is to be superficial. The moral oughts of the great seers of mankind are much deeper than the violation of some social mores or public conventions. We rather feel we are estranged from Someone and have broken faith with the Ground of our existence.

Nowhere outside the Bible except perhaps in the Greek tragic poets and dramatists, is the moral law seen operating with more majesty than in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. Why did Jean Valjean confess to Marius and return to prison, when another had been found guilty in his place? Why except that the burden of some transcendent Ought lay heavy on his soul. Jean Valjean says: "It is true that I might have lied, kept silent and all would have continued smoothly. You asked me what made me speak. A rogue of a thing—my conscience."

Call this an outworn taboo if you wish. Call it the pressure of the social mores. But he whose conscience was here speaking would have smiled at your interpretation and called it simple.

Something of this deeper dimension is in *God's Little Acre* by Caldwell. Ty Ty, who has been digging all over his land for gold, suddenly is overcome by remorse and a sense of a misspent life. Caldwell says, "He felt guilty of something—maybe it was sacrilege or desecration—whatever it was, he knew he had not played fair with God." Say you with the fool 'There is no God'?

Isn't there credulity in the expectation that the moral and spiritual values of western civilization can be preserved when cut off from their cosmic ground? from their Creator? To be sure, there are moral and high minded atheists. But many of them were nurtured first in a faith that they now deny. Let many generations pass and the Judeo-Christian faith cease even to be a memory and then see. Many an atheist is living off the funded spiritual capital of those who believe.

Nietzsche was aware that when he proclaimed that "God is dead," he was proclaiming a catastrophic event, "The end of an epoch," the dawn of a new and terrifying period in human history, which would wit-

ness the collapse of all values, as now known. Western civilization western culture with its sense of worth and dignity of man, the state the servant of man, freedom and dignity, government under law, not men, are all rooted and grounded in Greek rationalism and Hebraic ethical monotheism. Destroy the sense of the divine worth of man and will we for long believe in his dignity? Cease to believe in the doctrine of Creation and we become a cut-flower civilization.

Is this happening now in our culture, as we see moral laxity in many public areas and private lives? We study the laws of the universe but ignore the ground of these laws in intelligence. The philosophic capabilities of men are explored, but the Source of Wisdom is not considered.

Alfred Noyes in *Watchers of the Sky* asks:

Was the eye contrived by blindly moving atoms,
Or the still, listening ear fulfilled with music
By forces without knowledge of sweet sound?
Are nerves and brain so sensitively fashioned
While that for which we came, the power that made us
Is drowned in blank unconsciousness of it all?

Each of us must answer.

LIBERATION

When He is seen within the human heart,
Transcending in His brightness any sun,
Is known also supreme to dwell apart,
Where burning stars their far-off courses run,
Awakes the Knower then, which is the soul,
To take possession of the mortal life,
The lonely part converges in the whole,
While blissful calm descends upon the strife.
The doubts that plague the mind arise no more;
Loosened are the clinging ties that bind.
The spirit knows that it is free to soar,
And leave the heavy body far behind.
For him who wakes, there is no time nor space;
The then is now, and heaven any place.

— Mary Kershaw

Book Review

GOD OF A HUNDRED NAMES - Prayers of many peoples and creeds, collected and arranged by Barbara Greene and Victor Gollancz; Doubleday & Co. Inc., 575 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y., 298 pp., $3.95.

MEDITATION (From section on Suffering)

Why has our sincere prayer for each other such great power over others? Because of the fact that by cleaving to God during prayer I become one spirit with Him, and unite with myself, by faith and love, those for whom I pray: for the Holy Ghost acting in me al so acts at the same time in them, for He accomplishes all things. "We, being many, are one bread, one body." "There is one body and one Spirit."

John of Cronstadt (Russian Priest 1829-1908)

This meditation from GOD OF A HUNDRED NAMES seems to summarize the entire thought behind the book which is a collection of prayers that spans history from the pre-Christian era to our own times. It is truly a remarkable collection; and its selections speak out to us from all races, all ages, all faiths.

In a very real sense it embodies what Fellowship in Prayer stands for—that beyond the diversities of our faiths there is a oneness in our devotion to God. Our deepest prayers are not our own. They come from a common Father and we stand in Fellowship with one another.

The compilers have had this book in mind for many years, and patiently collected prayers which they believed would exemplify the spirit behind it. Perhaps one of the most unique features of the book—the one that especially distinguishes it from other collections of prayers—is that so many of them are new to most readers. One realizes with constant delight that when it comes to the love of God, there are no barriers.

The book is divided into convenient sections which cover most of our occasions to pray. Animals are included as well as neighbors and "enemies." There are prayers for the temptations we face and the forgiveness of sins. A section is given over to the contemplation of death and another one on worship, thanksgiving, and joy. These are only a few of the catagories.

The authors are from all corners of the earth and perhaps the most interesting fact is that many of them are not necessarily thought of as being associated with religion. For example, a sampling turns up

Leonardo da Vinci, Sir Francis Drake, Johannes Kepler the astronomer, Samuel Johnson and the novelist Thackeray. All major faiths are represented.

This is a book that every family should own and use each day. It is like taking a walk through a garden and being constantly surprised, delighted, and moved by the rare and unusual flowers that one comes across.

Unfortunately, space here does not permit more than a few random selections from the book:

O Lord, I, a begger, ask of Thee more than a thousand kings may ask of Thee; each one has something he needs to ask of Thee; I have come to ask Thee to give me Thyself.

Al-Ansari - *Sufi*

Though a man be soiled with the sins of a lifetime, let him but love me, rightly resolved, in utter devotion: I see no sinner. That man is holy.

The Bhagavad-Gita - *Hindu*

Lead me, O God, and I will follow, willingly if I am wise, but if not willingly I still must follow.

Early Stoic

I thank Thee, Lord, for knowing me better than I know myself, and for letting me know myself better than others know me. Make me, I pray Thee, better than they suppose, and forgive me for what they do not know.

Abu Bekr

Lord of the world, I beg of you to redeem Israel. And if you do not want to do that, then redeem the Gentiles.

Israel of Koznitz - 1814 - *Hasid*

Help us this day, O God, to serve Thee devoutly, and the world busily. May we do our work wisely, give succour secretly, go to meat appetitely, sit thereat discreetly, arise temperately, please our friends duly, go to bed merrily, and sleep surely; for the joy of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Traditional - *Middle Ages*

Give to me, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give me an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; give me an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow upon me also, O Lord my God, understanding to know Thee, diligence to seek Thee, wisdom to find Thee, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace Thee.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74)

— *P. F.*

SUFISM

the "Surrender"

Among *FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER'S* growing number of overseas readers is Dr. K. M. P. Mohamed Cassim, Ph. D., founder-president of Perfect Peace Lodge, a spiritual-philosophic organization headquartered at Veyangoda, Ceylon. With a recent communication expressing gratitude for recent issues of our magazine, he forwarded a pamphlet on "Sufism"—part of which is carried below.

Sufism, a movement orginating in the Seventh Century, has gained followers in Islam who seek the deepest possible religious experience, the closest union with God, in the present rather than the hereafter. The ascetic minority today represents about three per cent of Moslems and these are divided into numerous orders and fraternities. Many orders comprise fakirs or dervishers—some of them the "whirling dervishes" whose dancing is intended to induce an ecstasy in which they believe they can "know God."

The Sufis (whose name is derived from "*suf*"—wool—for the coarse, wool robes they wore) have been guided by the ideas of al-Ghazali, a legal and theological genius who is now revered as a saint. The earliest Sufis were Syrian Moslems who came under the influence of Christian mystics and organized monastic houses. Sufism, despite vigorous opposition from traditionalists, has introduced a strong saintliness, asceticism and rich poetry into Islam.

Much of the flavor of the Sufi movement is contained in the following, from "Sufism in a Nutshell," by Fuard Uduman:

Sufism the surrender, the majestic peace,
Love's flower that blooms in fragrant breeze,
It requires the One, the complete Whole,
If thou wish thy heart in it to mould.

Sufism or *Tasawwuf* is the mystical quintessence of Islam, emerging from the very heart of Islam, but without emphasizing rituals in which religions are usually expressed. Sufism is a pathway leading to direct communion with God. Through a process of annihilation of self, renunciation and an abiding faith that all things emanate from God, Sufism brings to life gently the truly divine in man and inspires him always to nurture the "spark" thus generated in him and in rare moments to experience ecstacy of blending it with its Source, the One Reality, God.

The mystic tradition manifested itself as the first expressions of truer and deeper religious spirit before the advent of the Holy Prophet. The earlier personalities, the ascetics and fakirs, were not called sufis even though they reached spiritual heights as "lonely sentinels" of God and were embodiments of Divine Grace. It was however in the personality of the Holy Prophet that *Tasawwuf* or Sufism received its impetus. Through succeeding generations many great sufi mystics through the gracious lives they led and through the beauty and force of prose and poetry gave expression to the essence of Sufism. They were able to do so because

they had surrendered themselves completely to the Divine Will of God and were inspired with the fire of real love. Arabia was the birthplace of Sufism and thence it spread to Iran, Persia, Spain and other neighbouring countries.

The Sufi approach is universal. It embraces all of humanity and all of nature as one brotherhood and its goal is ultimate absorption in God through the way of complete self-realization. The petty and unreal trivialities of caste and creed, or race or color do not matter to a true sufi. His deep concern is for the fire that burns unceasingly in continuous remembrance of God. The sincere manifestation of such a process is what holds his abiding interest, not the particular religious crucible in which it happens to "burn". As the great Sufi mystic Jalaludin Rumi expresses:

> *"The Truth is independent of outward forms: It shines brightly in the tavern as in the mosque or the church; moreover the religion of the heart, which alone has value, is not the monopoly of any particular creed. In reality all creeds are one...."*

Annihilation of the self is the sufi's *"mussala"* (prayer carpet) and his goal, the vision of, and ultimate unification with God. It is thus, from the state of *fana* (passing away of mortality), that he treads the path to *baqa* (immortality). A true sufi does not cut himself away from the world. He plunges into it and is yet not of it. In his struggle for self-realization and identification with His Greater Self, the spiritual weapons which a sufi uses are elimination of the carnal self *(nafs)*, the practice of repentance *(tawba)*, patience *(sabr)*, gratitude *(shukr)*, asceticism *(zuhd)*, sincerity *(ikhlas)*, love *(muhabba)* and fellowship with God *(uns)*. Thus a sufi, though he merges with the world and all worldly things, yet he is free and unattached. To a sufi his pilgrimage lies in circumambulating the "Ka'ba" of the heart which seekers of Truth discover, which is the seat of God—the "hidden" throne from which man should seek to rule himself.

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Science of the Soul

You are not a body with a soul, you are the soul... The trouble with people today is that they have forgotten who they are, their true identity as children of God... The soul is under control of mind—mind is under control of our outward faculties, and we are identified with them so much that we have forgotten our selves. We have to liberate ourselves from then and know ourselves....

This, in part, spoke Sant Kirpal Singh Ji of Delhi, India, president of the World Fellowship of Religions and head of a movement known as Ruhani Satsang (Science of the Soul). Devotees, said to number about one million around the world, call Kirpal Singh the "Master." About thirty of these attended an interview in Chicago recently with the vigorous, 69-year-old, white-bearded six-footer who was on a three-month visit to this country. He was conferring with political and religious leaders of all faiths and inviting delegates to the Third Conference of World Religions in India next year.

Having served thirty-six years as a civil servant under the British Government in India, Kirpal Singh retired in 1947 as deputy assistant controller of military accounts and then devoted himself entirely to a Science of the Soul and the World Fellowship of Religions. The goal of the movement, he explained, is to offer "sincere seekers after truth" firsthand "experience of spirituality without distinction of caste, creed, nationality, color or sex. To bring all children of God together, so as to understand each other, not to change their religion, but just to understand."

At two previous conferences of the World Fellowship, at Delhi in 1957 and Calcutta in 1960, Kirpal Singh said, delegates represented about 250 religious groups from various parts of the world, as well as some 200,000 non-delegates, mainly from India.

Science of the Soul, explained the Indian sage at the Chicago conference, offers the experience of transcending material fetters, of knowing "the Spirit who dwells within yet controls the universe."

This, for Christians, he said is the experience of being "born again. He quoted from Jesus' teaching: "Except as you be born anew, you cannot enter the kingdom of God."

"Be still physically and intellectually and know God, controlling Power of all," he said, also quoting Buddhist writings: "The self finds refuge in the self. What other refuge can there be? But unless we control ourselves, this is hard to gain."

"We develop physically and intellectually, but of our own self we know little or nothing," Kirpal Singh said. "Yet only by developing spiritually will we find true happiness. Spirituality—knowing self and knowing God—is the only hope for the world. Then we know we are all children of God." He pointed to Judeo-Christian Scriptures: "...'Love thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy strength and with all thy soul.' And since God resides in every heart, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' ...It is these truths of the Oneness of God and the oneness of all humanity that we must revive.

"When man becomes wholly absorbed in the outer practices of religion, forgetting the inner meaning, he begins believing that his own particular creed is the best in all the world and that the rest are either false or inferior... Truth comes not from the cursory reading of the Scriptures alone, but from inner experiences of the soul....

"Man, forgetting the real teaching of the great sages, has tended with time to identify religion with a particular system of intellectual beliefs or of ethics. All this has led naturally to sectarianism and dogma, which in turn has led to fanaticism and bigotry, and these to hatred, violence and bloodshed....

"The answer to religious prejudice is not less religion but more... The more one enters religious thought, the more universal it appears. Religion in its essence is not a means for dividing man from man, but, by its very meaning, a mode for binding him back to his source....

"Its ethics is not based on hatred, but on love, and it is on... nonviolence and disciplined righteous living that it bases its search for the God within this human temple, the God that is in all."

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special drama report

Luther

One of the most powerful dramas to reach Broadway in many seasons is the current hit, "Luther," by the English playwright, John Osborne, who has come to be known as one of that country's foremost "angry young men." His dramatization deals with the key years in the life of the Protestant Reformation leader, beginning with his admission to the Augustinian Order in Erfurt, Germany, in 1506, and continuing to 1530.

The play has its controversial aspects; it stands apart from the traditional "religious drama," but in New York—where critics unanimously hailed the production—and also during extended runs in London, Edinburgh, Paris and Helsinki, the drama's treatment of Luther has been assessed as a stirring and "fascinating portrayal of man's eternal search for truth and for faith with integrity." Interestingly, the preceding quote is from one of the leaders of American Lutheranism, Dr. Paul C. Empie, executive director of the National Lutheran Council. He and many religious leaders of many faiths have showered considerable praise on the play.

The one aspect of the drama most cited as an area where the playwright possibly is guilty of overemphasis is its pointed dealing with Luther as a man. The play's language is that of the times—earthy. And Mr. Osborne suggests that the Reformer's physical problems, intestinal disturbances that long plagued him, had a strong psychological impact on his thoughts and actions. Though debatable, the suggestion is interesting.

The following comments on the play were written especially for Fellowship in Prayer by Randall E. Poe, a New York writer and former newspaper reporter and editor who is an avid student of the arts and their influence on personal and national thought:

"There is nothing more powerful than an Idea whose time has

come."

This quotation is perfectly pertinent to the Broadway play "Luther" which examines the essence and endurance of ideas and depicts how one notion became a movement which lifted history itself.

The play exhaustively scrutinizes the gestation and immortality of an idea, conceived in faith. It is true that ideas are shaped and colored by their times and to a certain extent by fate, but the play demonstrates the more critical importance of the vessel in which the idea rests.

If that vessel be a man constipated (most of the time physically and much of the time mentally), the idea is no less potent. And if the man be almost perpetually uncertain, the idea is no less endurable. In the case of Martin Luther, the idea incredibly sprang free and became world dynamite. And the man's weaknesses, also grounded in faith, unloosed strength. Luther's celebrated constipation symbolizes a soul's struggle to break loose and climb.

The dramatization does something for Luther the man and the Reformation that books and sermons and special church dialogue have not done for large numbers of people. It traps both the man and the idea in unison. It makes us aware as perhaps historical texts cannot of the epic trials of a mighty conscience. The by-products of a most-human belief, wrapped in faith, come more acutely in view.

On that famous day of reckoning when Luther is called upon to renounce his "heretical" beliefs, his soul cannot move from where he has placed it and he does not know why. He can only say:

"Here I stand; God help me; I can do no more."

Luther could not be certain of what he was doing or saying. He only did it. The fluent lesson to be taken from this stand is that one can never be sure. From a mixed bag of alternatives, we make our selection and then stand. There can be no outside help for big decisions. The answers are locked within.

In Luther's case, his answers assumed proportions and directions he could not have grasped. As instruction, the important message is that a commitment was made, firmly and forever more.

The portrayal of Luther by English actor Albert Finney focuses as tightly on the insufficiencies as on the gallantry of the man. Soon after taking his vows as an Augustinian monk, Luther's spiritual doubts are framed in these words: "I'm afraid of the darkness, and the hole in it; and I see it sometime of every day. And some days more than once even,

and there's no bottom to it, no bottom to my breath, and I can't reach it...."

It is from this terrifyingly human abyss that he must begin. But the doubts do not block his search for alternatives, for personal rather than hand-me-down answers; and they cannot stop him from assailing what he felt to be monstrous wrongs. Once the decision was made, darkness did not disappear. Black intellectual doubts remained. But the faith hung steady and the soul held amidst flayings and perverse winds.

The sale of indulgences (to remit both past and future sins in the words of an engaging caricature named Tetzel in the play) provide Luther with an axis for his central argument: that in the end men must be counted as men, that good works stand empty beside faith. And in the pivotal delivery of the ninety-five theses in Castle Church in Wittenberg, Luther can come to terms with both himself and his belief: "This I know: reason is the devil's whore...no man is just because he does just works. The works are just if the man is just."

The strict theological arguments of this stand aside, the words epitomize Luther's sense of what is required of him. And at the same time, they illustrate the development of an idea which collided with much of the conventional wisdom of his time. Called upon to reject his idea, Luther pushes himself to a point of no turning back by saying: "I cannot and will not recant, since to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor honest."

The journey to this moral crossroads was a tortuous one, but it served as a purifying consummation of Luther's faith.

In a chat later with his old friend Staupitz, he is asked whether he was certain of what he was doing.

"I listened for God's voice," Luther answered, "but all I could hear was my own."

"Were you sure?" Staupitz asked.

"No."

The fact that Luther's stand provoked a bloody peasant uprising which Luther then chose to neglect and even debase is another matter, perhaps another illustration of his abiding weakness and uncertainty. The essential instruction to history, and to an appreciation of his idea, is that a wavering man speculated fiercely with himself and then stood. As a result, his act, its consequences and personal faith are illuminated.

Thoughts appropriate around the calendar,
but particularly fitting as we address
ourselves to a new year...from "An Argosy
of Meditations," selections from Waldemar
Argow's Sunday morning prayers and meditations
at First Unitarian Church, Toledo, Ohio.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF TIME

O Thou who are the eternal within the transient: because we are voyagers on a river of no return; because we are pilgrims who cannot tarry in this holy land; because our lives are transient even though life is eternal—help us to understand the preciousness of time.

Teach us that time is the dearest thing a man can spend, and so we must learn to spend it wisely. May we take time to live, for this world is not a jungle to hasten through but a pleasant place to love and be at home in. May we take time to walk abroad in every kind of weather: time to lean against the wind, which sweeps away the past; to feel the sun, which guides our present steps; to see the stars, which promise a tomorrow for our children, and for theirs.

May we take time to spend a quiet hour in that sanctuary a man creates when he is alone with the highest that he knows; time to understand that thou are as close as the air we breathe and as real as the bodies that breathe it.

May we take time for the little things of life—that are not so little after all: for flowers to grow and animals to love, for the friendly greeting that makes the lonely man less lonely and the word of comfort that eases the sufferings of sorrow. And may we take time for the big things too: for the search for truth which no man completes, for service to our fellow men which is the rent we pay for our room on earth, and for fighting battles in behalf of causes that are lost only when we think them so.

May we take time for books that teach us, for art that inspires us, and for music that sings to say what cannot be said prosaically. Out of the treasury of hours allotted each of us, may we take a few and spend them recklessly—in running forth to meet the dawn, in gambling on the goodness in an outcast's heart, in laughing at the wonderful absurdities of mortal life.

In the storehouse of time which each man owns there are two days we need never concern ourselves about—the day that is past and the day that is yet to come. Give us the wisdom to understand what these words mean so that we may live this day in all its promise to the full and when evening comes have no regrets—for what has he to mourn who has done his best, by himself, by his fellows, and by thee? Amen

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The greatest man is he who chooses the right with the most invincible resolution; who resists the sorest temptation from within and without; who bears the heaviest burden cheerfully; who is calmest in storms, and most fearless under menaces and frowns; whose reliance on truth, on virtue, and on God is most unfaltering.

— Seneca

Lord, teach to youth this profound truth,
The inner value is the stone
On which the house of life is built
And grows into a living throne.

— Loreta Inman

IN MEMORIAM

Millions of words of grief, condolence—and most of all, prayer—have issued forth throughout the world since the fateful November 22, 1963, when an assassin's bullet struck down President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The act, so grotesque as to touch the hearts and thoughts of men everywhere, has implications which also are universal. It has caused, and should continue to cause citizens of all nations, members of all faiths whose belief is in God and who ascribe to the "universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy," (as stated in the Fellowship in Prayer *Purpose)* to intensify their petitions for Divine Guidance in these times of turbulence.

The following prayer was perhaps the first to be formally issued following news that Mr. Kennedy had been shot. In those brief moments between receipt of the news in the United States Senate and the ensuing tragic word that the President had succumbed, Senate Chaplain Frederick Brown Harris created the prayer. Though it was not God's will that Mr. Kennedy be spared, the Chaplain's spontaneous petition nevertheless stands as a stirring call for all men to be ever mindful of the need to seek God's strength.

"Our Father, Thou knowest that this sudden, almost unbelievable news, has stunned our minds and hearts, as we gaze at a vacant place against the sky, as the President of the Republic goes down like a giant cedar, green with boughs, goes down, with a great shout upon the hills, and leaves a lonesome place against the sky.

"We pray that in Thy will his life may still be spared, In this hour we cry out in words that were uttered in another hour of deep loss and bereavement: 'God live! And the government at Washington still stands.'

"Hold us, we pray, and the people of America, calm and steady and full of faith for the Republic in this tragic hour of our history. God save the state and empower her for whatever awaits for the great world role she has been called to fill in this time of destiny. Amen."

BEYOND THE DARK

Gray clouds hang low
above the reaching sea
whose waters
pushed by wind and tide
assault the shore.
Sea gulls, waiting up for rain,
huddle on sodden sand.
Their drooping feathers
wet with spray,
they stand
all facing windward
among the moving mounds of foam.

A hanging dome
darkens the earth
till suddenly, and far,
far out where sea meets sky
the dark is pierced
by one thin stream of light.

Remembering the constant sun
I have no need for sight.

— Emily Sargent Councilman

EDITORIAL

LOOKING AT RELIGION—STATISTICALLY

Back in the "good old days," it was popular to claim, America was a religious nation, a mass of people bound together by spiritual fibre and standing on a firm foundation of faith. The present is called the "post-Christian" era, an encompassing term relating not only to Christianity but to all religious belief. Many feel the sprawling influence of secularism, the powerful drive for material gain, the undeniable new pluralistic face on our society has relegated religion to a place down several rungs on the spiritual ladder. The argument is difficult to deny; too vivid and numerous are examples of irreligious behavior, of dead or dying churches and synagogues.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note evidence also present which, if not overruling the opinion that religion is a lesser force, at least calls the contention into question.

One such bit of evidence seen in recent weeks is in the form of statistical findings by one of the nation's foremost research organizations: Elmo Roper and Associates. Commissioned by the widely-circulated Sunday supplement magazine, This Week, the Roper firm analyzed "the American Sunday." The goal of the project was to determine attitudes toward the day, generalize average Sunday habits, come to some conclusion as to the current status of the Sabbath in the minds of Americans. The survey covered Jews as well as Christians, with queries directed toward the frequency of "religious observances" over a given period.

Though suspicious in advance (Mr. Roper confided as he announced the findings) that the survey would highlight a slipping religion, the overall conclusion following analysis of answers from a selected cross-section of adults was:

"A good many people—in fact, about fifty percent—do feel a nostalgic longing towards Sundays of a generation ago...yet, Sunday is still a very special day, in fact, the most popular day of the week... And why is Sunday the most popular day? For nearly half of the people, it is because Sunday is a religious day—the day they go to church. In fact, we can still describe ourselves as a churchgoing nation."

A breakdown of the findings revealed that: eight percent say they

never go to church...over half of American adults will be found in church on an average Sunday...two-thirds go to church at least once a month... women go a bit more than men...the young people attend as frequently as the old...Southerners lead the nation in attendance...Catholics attend more often than Protestants and Protestants more than Jews....

Statistics, to be sure, often can be interpreted according to whim What is proof to some can be seen as denial by others. Though of high reputation and desirous only of the most accurate conclusions, it is possible that the Roper firm missed the true cross-section of the population. And though continuing to maintain that America's tradition as a "church-going nation" still holds true, the survey also found that the current trend is not toward more churchgoing but dips slightly in the opposite direction. Also, in looking for reasons why Sunday is the most popular day of the week, large groups of people said they looked forward to the opportunities for rest and relaxation, for visiting with relatives and friends. Those anticipating Sunday worship—public or private—do not necessarily dominate.

Like most surveys, this latest probably should not be either absolutely accepted or rejected. There is a middle ground. Out of this area comes the conclusion that, if considerable numbers of people exist who can statistically be counted as "religious," the bulk of these are failing to adhere in daily life to the principles they profess. Too broad are the strains of hate in this nation and around the world; too numerous are the instances of man's inhumanity to man.

There is no statistical measuring-stick for the depth of religious belief in any nation, among any people. For true belief lies deep within the individual and is a matter of personal communion with God. The sad conclusion, judging man's actions around the turbulent globe, is that too few individuals—among both "frequent" churchgoers and those in the "never worship" category—are standing up to be counted in the only meaningful survey. This is the survey being constantly conducted by the Supreme research organization which comes up with only a single simple total: one plus One.

Yet, such analyses of the religious complexion of the nation as was recently conducted, can have value. We don't have to accept all the conclusions, or any of them. But we can be interested in the investigation, and—most importantly—let it be an investigation of ourselves.

— Neil Mellblom

NOTICES and COMMENTS

NEW ADVISOR. Fellowship in Prayer is pleased to welcome Dr. C. H. Yeang of Penang, Malaya, to serve as an advisor of our Fellowship in the Far East. Besides his medical practice he is currently president of the Rotary Club of Penang; the editor and publisher of THE MALAYAN THEOSOPHIST quarterly, and is engaged in numerous other worthwhile activities. Dr. Yeang has been highly recommended to carry forward our effort in that section of the globe. A photograph of his fine family is carried on this page... Our new advisor is also the originator of the World-wide Divine Love Radiation Service and his inspiring and instructive leaflets have in the past been distributed with our bimonthly. Since 1960, he informs us in a recent communication, some 300,000 copies of one of his basic leaflets have been issued around the world. Dr. Yeang's venture—to enlist ever-larger numbers of people in the mutual practice of prayer on a prescribed schedule, for a regular five-minute period each day—seems truly to be gaining strength. It is indeed gratifying that he deems it a privilege to serve Fellowship in Prayer. At the same time, he calls on all of us to join him in his endeavor. In a late leaflet, he maintains: "It is the devoted and faithful prayers alone, that will lead a despairing world...one step nearer the Light."

—III—

FIP NOTES. It's not too late to order your Christmas cards! Our specially designed 1963 cards are still available, and can be in your hands in time for use yet this year. Enclosed in this issue is a sample card, together with an order blank and complete data on prices. On receipt of your order, the cards will be on their way to you within forty-eight hours....

From time to time we are reminded by readers that they would like to see more articles included in *FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER* on the various World Faiths. Just recently we received a communication from a long-time friend and supporter of our work, Mr. John S. Pillsbury, in which he strongly urged us to print more articles on the various Great Religions of the World. Naturally, we prefer that such articles be written by persons within the particular faith itself, thus making the writing authoritative. We shall, of course, be grateful for the cooperation of our readers in this respect....

Our Advisor, Rhoda Hung, the wife of our Fellowship President, was taken critically ill early in October and was hospitalized for several weeks in a Massachusetts hospital. She is now convalescing at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Sheldon Chang, in Riverdale, New York... Mrs. Hung is humbly grateful for the many prayers that have been offered in her behalf. She said, "It seemed as though there were waves of prayer coming from all directions to support and strengthen me." May our prayers continue for Rhoda Hung's complete recovery, and may it be Thy Will that she be restored to her usual good health to resume her work in promoting understanding and good will.

—m—

CONTRIBUTORS. As always, we are gratified at the number and quality of manuscripts contributed voluntarily by not only Contributing Editors but also to old friends and the increasing number of new acquaintances have sent articles. New names include Neil and Marnie Mellblom. Mr. Mellblom, under the supervision of Miss Kathryn G. Brown, Executive Secretary, and Mr. Peter V. K. Funk, Trustee, has been acting as Editor of the current issue. His wife is author of the page 2 article, *Christmas Boycott?* On page 11 *Prescription for Prayer* by Virginia Armstrong, is a voluntary contribution gratefully received, as is the poem, *Beyond the Dark,* by Emily Sargent Councilman, on page 31. As noted above, the quest for a greater amount of material on the various Great Religions this issue produced the articles on *Sufism,* page 20, and *Science of the Soul,* page 23. The former was made available by Dr. K. M. P. Mohamed Cassim of Ceylon, founder of Perfect Peace Lodge, and the latter was compiled from news sources.

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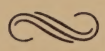
PROPHECY

He lay there in calm sleep this son of God.
A gift of purity, unselfish, clean
Creation's word made flesh upon the sod,
Birthday of love for man where fear had been.
Surrounded by the treasures of his life
His family who loved him and simple things.
Yet from afar through danger and great strife
Came gifts from all the world, homage of kings.
Still through this joy there seemed somehow to fall
Forboding darkness of a distant pain.
It crept into the heart with ominous pall
A harbinger of grief that left its stain.
In star-rays shining on the Christ-child's head
Loomed shadows of a cross and where it led.

— Zelma S. Dennis



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